

Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters

Table of Contents *(scroll or use links below to navigate document)*

What They Do

Tasks

Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

Work Environment

California's Job Outlook and Wages

Trends

Training

Where Do I Find the Job?

Where Can the Job Lead?

Other Sources



View Career Video

What They Do

Despite the development of plastics and other high-tech materials, the demand for wood products continues to be strong. Helping to meet this demand are Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters. These workers often work in small or medium-sized shops, but some work in large companies producing high-volume products.

These workers use power and hand tools to cut, shape, and attach wood to make durable, attractive wood cabinets and other products. They may work with similar products such as solid surface countertops that behave much like wood and employ the same or similar tools.

Some of the tools Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters use include portable power saws, routers, drills, and screwdrivers. They also frequently use large, stationary tools such as table saws, radial-arm saws, drill presses, routers, joiners, and lathes.

Before or after a wooden product is assembled, some woodworkers finish by sanding, taping off sections if necessary, and staining or painting the product. Sometimes, the wood is sealed after the stain or paint dries.

While equipment has had a great impact on workers in the largest, most efficient firms, precision or custom woodworkers—who generally work in smaller firms—have continued to employ the same production techniques they have used for many years. Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters and those in other woodworking occupations work on a customized basis, often building one-of-a-kind items. These highly skilled precision woodworkers usually perform a complete cycle of tasks—cutting, shaping, and preparing surfaces, and assembling prepared parts of complex wood components into a finished wood product. For this reason, these workers normally need substantial training and an ability to work from detailed instructions and specifications. In addition, they often are required to exercise independent judgment when undertaking an assignment.

Tasks

- ▶ Study blueprints, drawings, and written specifications of articles to be constructed or repaired and plans sequence of performing such operations.
- ▶ Mark dimensions of parts on paper or lumber stock, following blueprints, and match lumber for color, grain, and texture.

Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters

Construction Careers

- ▶ Set up and operate machines, including power saws, jointers, mortisers, tenoners, molders, and shapers, to cut and shape woodstock.
- ▶ Trim component parts of joints to ensure snug fit, using hand tools, such as planes, chisels, or wood files.
- ▶ Bore holes for insertion of screws or dowel by hand or using boring machine.
- ▶ Glue, fit, and clamp parts and subassemblies together to form complete unit.
- ▶ Drive nails or other fasteners to joints of articles to prepare articles for finishing.
- ▶ Sand and scrape surfaces and joints of articles to prepare articles for finishing.
- ▶ Dip, brush, or spray assembled articles with protective or decorative materials, such as stain, varnish, or lacquer.
- ▶ Install hardware, such as hinges, catches, and drawer pulls, using hand tools.

Detailed descriptions of these occupations may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ▶ Building and Construction — Knowledge of materials, methods, and the tools involved in the construction or repair of houses, buildings, or other structures such as highways and roads.
- ▶ Design — Knowledge of design techniques, tools, and principles involved in production of precision technical plans, blueprints, drawings, and models.
- ▶ Engineering and Technology — Knowledge of the practical application of engineering science and technology. This includes applying principles, techniques, procedures, and equipment to the design and production of various goods and services.
- ▶ Production and Processing — Knowledge of raw materials, production processes, quality control, costs, and other techniques for maximizing the effective manufacture and distribution of goods.
- ▶ Equipment Selection — Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- ▶ Mathematics — Using mathematics to solve problems.
- ▶ Written Comprehension — The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
- ▶ Arm-Hand Steadiness — The ability to keep your hand and arm steady while moving your arm or while holding your arm and hand in one position.
- ▶ Manual Dexterity — The ability to quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.
- ▶ Visualization — The ability to imagine how something will look after it is moved around or when its parts are moved or rearranged.
- ▶ Information Ordering — The ability to arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).

Work Environment

Most cabinet shops are adequately lighted and ventilated, although not all shops are heated or air-conditioned. The locations where the finished products are installed are usually clean, although they may not be heated or air-conditioned. Working conditions include machine and tool noise, and the presence of wood dust and possible finishing vapors. Cabinetmakers and

Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters

Bench Carpenters must often wear protective equipment for ear, eye, skin, and lung hazards. Workers must also follow operating safety instructions and use safety shields or guards when operating equipment to prevent accidents.

Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters normally work 40 hours in a five-day week but may work overtime on certain jobs, especially in the summer. Some belong to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. However, most of these workers in California are not members of a trade union.

California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters				
51-7011	17,800	18,900	560	\$9.33 to \$16.49

Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

Employment for Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters is expected to grow more slowly than the average for all occupations in California. In addition to the overall growth in the number of jobs, there will be about 4,500 jobs over the 10-year forecast period that become available because of people leaving the occupation.

Although the cabinetmaking trade has a long tradition, change has come to some of the larger shops in California. One of the critical aspects of making cabinets and other manufactured products is correctly estimating the material needed for making the cabinets, thus providing accurate bids for jobs. In recent years, computer software has been created that helps in this crucial part of the industry. This has allowed cabinet making shops to closely manage materials and cut down on mistakes in estimating costs.

Demand for Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters will stem from increases in population, personal income, and business expenditures, in addition to the continuing need for repair and renovation of residential and commercial properties. Therefore, opportunities should be available for workers who specialize in such items as moldings, cabinets, stairs, and windows.

Due to increasingly automated manufacturing processes, job prospects will be best for highly skilled Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters with knowledge of computerized numerical control (CNC) machine tool operation. This technology has raised worker productivity by allowing one operator to simultaneously tend a greater number of machines. With computerized numerical controls, an operator can program a machine to perform a sequence of operations automatically, resulting in greater precision and reliability.

Technological advances, such as robots and CNC machinery, will continue to increase productivity among woodworkers, preventing employment from rising as fast as the demand for wood products,

Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters

particularly in the mills and manufacturing plants where many processes can be automated. In addition, more jobs in the United States will be lost as imports continue to grow and as U.S. firms move some production to other countries. Also, the demand for wood may be reduced somewhat, as materials such as metal, plastic, and fiberglass continue to be used in many products as alternatives to wood. Environmental measures designed to control various pollutants used in, or generated by, woodworking processes also may adversely impact employment.

Employment in this occupation is highly sensitive to economic cycles. During economic downturns, workers are subject to layoffs or reductions in hours.

Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Most Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters learn their trade on the job. Starting with simple tasks, a beginning Cabinetmaker can progress to more and more complicated jobs as they learn the trade. They can sometimes start doing basic machine operations in a few weeks or months, but learning all aspects of the job can take several years.

That process can be shortened somewhat by taking woodworking classes in high school or a community college. These classes emphasize the safe operation of machines, understanding the differences in types of wood, basic shop mathematics, construction techniques, and finish techniques. A background in construction can be helpful, though there are many aspects of cabinetmaking that are unique to that industry.

There are no specific apprenticeship programs for Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters, although a general program for carpenters is offered. This consists of four years of classroom and on-the-job training. Programs are offered at various places throughout California, and are overseen by the California Department of Industrial Relations.

Some Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters acquire skills through vocational education or by doing carpentry work on construction jobs. Others may attend colleges or universities that offer training in areas including wood technology, furniture manufacturing, wood engineering, and production management. These programs prepare students for positions in production, supervision, engineering, and management.

Due to the growing sophistication of machinery and a subsequent need for retraining, employers increasingly seek applicants with a high school diploma or the equivalent. Other important qualities for entrants in this occupation include mechanical ability, manual dexterity, and the ability to pay attention to detail.

No specific schooling is required to obtain a contractor's license. One of the specialty licenses issued by the California State Contractor's License Board is for Cabinet, Millwork, and Finish Carpentry.

Recommended High School Course Work

Employers look for applicants who have at least a high school diploma. High school preparation should include courses in carpentry, wood shop, basic mathematics, science, computer applications, drafting, and English.

Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Employers include companies that make kitchen and bath cabinets, general building contractors (commercial and industrial), and lumber and sawmills.

Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search using keywords from the following construction industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- ▶ Custom Architectural Woodwork & Millwork
- ▶ Institutional Furniture Manufacturing
- ▶ Manufactured/Mobile Home Manufacturing
- ▶ Miscellaneous Wood Product Manufacturing
- ▶ Nonupholstered Wood Household Furniture
- ▶ Other Millwork (including Flooring)
- ▶ Upholstered Household Furniture Mfg.
- ▶ Wood Container and Pallet Manufacturing
- ▶ Wood Kitchen Cabinets and Countertops
- ▶ Wood Office Furniture Manufacturing
- ▶ Wood TV, Radio, & Sewing Mach. Housing
- ▶ Wood Window and Door Manufacturing

For local listings of contractors, search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- ▶ Cabinetmakers
- ▶ Furniture
- ▶ Wood Carving
- ▶ Wood Finishing, Refinishing and Repairs
- ▶ Wood Specialties
- ▶ Wood Turning
- ▶ Wood Workers

Where Can The Job Lead?

Advancement opportunities often are limited and depend upon availability, seniority, and a worker's skills and initiative. Sometimes experienced woodworkers become inspectors or supervisors responsible for the work of a group of woodworkers. Production workers often can advance into these positions by assuming additional responsibilities and by attending workshops, seminars, or college programs. Those who are highly skilled may set up their own woodworking shops. A contractor's specialty license for Cabinet, Millwork and Finish Carpentry is offered by the California Contractors State Licensing Board (www.cslb.ca.gov).

Other Sources of Information

Cabinet Makers Association
www.cabinetmakers.org

Woodworking Machinery Industry Association
www.wmia.org

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America
www.carpenters.org

Department of Industrial Relations
www.dir.ca.gov

California Department of Consumer Affairs, Contractors State License Board
www.cslb.ca.gov

Associated Builders and Contractors
www.abc.org

